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ABSTRACT

The Choctaw Bilingual Education Program is a plan operating in 4 public school systems in Oklahoma to expand the educational opportunities of Choctaw children. The 4 major program components are inservice workshops, an inservice instructional program in the public schools, parental and community involvement, and a 5-year master's-level teacher-preparation program. Based on the idea that Choctaw children will find the most satisfying lives if they recognize and accept the fact that the Choctaw people live in a world of 2 languages and 2 cultures, the program is intended as a service through which teachers and aides may find or develop insights, materials, and techniques to help in working with Choctaw children. The handbook discusses major educational needs of Choctaw children, what teachers and aides need to know about language, and how the program can meet the needs of Choctaw bilingual children. Reference is made to materials available for the classroom, materials available for inservice training, and techniques in bilingual education. Appended is a list of terms, with definitions, commonly used in the study of language. (JH)

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A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND AIDES

OF

THE CHOCTAW BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

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August 1971

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Joseph E. Littlejohn

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I. What the Choctaw Bilingual Education Program is

The Choctaw Bilingual Education Program is a plan to expand the educational opportunities of Choctaw children. It now operates in four public school systems--Battiest, Broken Bow, Smithville, and Wright City. It was initiated by Southeastern State College and by the administrators of these four schools, working with Mrs. Fayrene Benson, McCurtain County Superintendent of Schools. It is funded under Federal legislation enacted to improve instruction of bilingual children (Title VII of P. L. 89-10). The planning stage of the Program was directed by Dr. Wade Baskin, Head of the Foreign Language Department of Southeastern State College. The operational stage, which began on July 1, 1970, is the joint responsibility of Mrs. Benson and Dr. Leon Hibbs, President of Southeastern State College. Mr. Pierce Martin was named Program Director beginning July 1, 1971.

The Program has four major components: (1) inservice workshops; (2) an inservice instructional program in the public schools; (3) parental and community involvement; and (4) a five-year teacher preparation program.

Mr. Martin expects to spend most of his time in McCurtain County, helping administrators and teachers to achieve the objectives of the Program. Associate Directors of the Program are Mr. Gene Wilson and Mr. Jorge Morales. Mr. Wilson's primary concern is parental and community involvement, but he also conducts a weekly seminar for Choctaw college students in the teacher preparation program. Mr. Morales' primary concern is the prepara-

tion of bilingual teachers. Students participating in the teacher preparation program also serve as School-Community Coordinators in the Program. An Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of the Choctaw community, continuously evaluates the operation of the Program and offers suggestions for its improvement. Members of the Advisory Committee, public school administrators, staff members, consultants, inservice teachers and aides, and School-Community Coordinators are listed in Appendix B (deleted).

The Program is not designed to dictate to classroom teachers and aides what they must do in the classroom. It is intended rather as a service through which teachers and aides may find or develop insights, materials, and techniques to help them in working with Choctaw children.

The Program is based on the idea that Choctaw children will find the most satisfying lives if they recognize and accept the fact that the Choctaw people live in a world of two languages and two cultures--Choctaw-American and Anglo-American.

II. Some major educational needs of Choctaw children

Since the Choctaw Bilingual Education Program is designed to meet the educational needs of Choctaw children, a careful assessment of their needs was made before the Program was planned. The main needs identified are:

(1) To acquire training and experience in the use of English in various situations with emphasis on features of English which are especially difficult for speakers of Choctaw,

(2) To have some activities conducted in Choctaw,

(3) To develop a positive self-concept,

(4) To have teachers who recognize important differences between Choctaw- and Anglo-American children and who know how to make these differences contribute to the Choctaw child's learning.

Many teachers and aides in the first year of operation of the Program related stories concerning these needs. One told of a child who wished that he weren't Choctaw. Another of a Choctaw child who was considered stupid by his teacher because he couldn't follow simple directions to color something a certain color when the problem was that the Choctaw division of the color spectrum differs from that of English. And still another told of a teacher who believed a Choctaw student was irresponsible in missing a week of classes because of the death of a rather distant relative although Choctaw funerals are traditionally long.

Consequently, the Choctaw child usually needs to have an edu-

cational program which is adapted to his special cultural differences. He needs a teacher who knows, for example, that, since Choctaw does not have the sound speakers of English use at the beginning and end of the word spelled j-u-d-g-e, he may say something like Cheesus for Jesus and may need special help in learning the sound.

In order to meet such needs of Choctaw children, the Program provides two main services. First, it provides materials both for classroom instruction and for information of teachers and aides; second, it provides workshops to help teachers and aides learn more about the Choctaw people and to learn how to use the special classroom materials and techniques.

III. What teachers and aides need to know about language

In order to work with bilingual children as effectively as possible, teachers and aides need to know much about how a language signals meaning.

The original form of every natural language known is speech. For most languages which have a writing system, speech came long before writing; and there are still many languages which have no writing system. All modern writing systems for natural languages are, in one way or another, based upon speech.

The spoken form of a language may be thought of as a system of signals of meaning in which the significant sounds are combined in certain ways to make larger units.

The basic elements of a spoken language are its system of sounds. Choctaw has a system of about twenty distinctive sounds; English has a system of about forty. Many of the Choctaw sounds and the English sounds are identical; but Choctaw has some sounds that English does not have, and English has some that Choctaw does not have.

Although these sounds have no meaning of their own, they are the elements from which the meaningful units of speech are built. Every language has certain restrictions on the order in which sounds can be combined. For example, Choctaw does not begin words with sequences of consonant sounds like tr and gr; and English does not have sequences like gt and mgr at the beginning of words.

The distinctive sounds of a language are combined within such restrictions as those mentioned above to form the meaningful units of language. Although many words such as boy, house and hit have just one unit of meaning apiece, many other words have several units of meaning. For example, the word childlike consists of two units of meaning--child and like; similarly, cheerful consists of cheer and -ful, manly of man and -ly. Even words like boys, houses, and hits consist of two units of meaning--the base word and the suffix, which, for nouns, means "two or more." Some words have more than two units of meaning; for example, unmanly has three obvious units of meaning: un-, man, and -ly; and unmanliness has four: un-, man, -li-, and -ness.

It is reasonable to analyze words like pinched, pinching, sweeter, sweetest, and elephants as each consisting of two units of meaning--the base and the suffix; -ed means "past time," -er means "more," and -s means "two or more." Again, Choctaw and English have similarities and differences in the use of such suffixes. Although both, for example, have tense systems, which signal very similar meanings, Choctaw does not use tense suffixes. And Choctaw does not have forms like "sweeter" and "sweetest."

The words of a language are only a part of the language. If someone tells you only that a woman named Suzy and a man named Bill are involved in an action called stabbing, you do not have enough information to know what exactly happened.

You know only as much as isolated words can tell you. You need to know how Suzy and Bill are related to the action of stabbing. Every language has a means of indicating such relationships. Commonly used means are word-order and suffixes. English relies heavily on word-order to indicate such relationships:

Myrtle pinched Ralph.
Ralph pinched Myrtle.

Choctaw also uses word-order to indicate relationships, but not the same order as English. Compare, for example, the following sentences:

Tobookoli impa.
He eats lunch.

Tobookoli is "lunch," and impa is "he eats"--the English word-order is the opposite of the Choctaw.

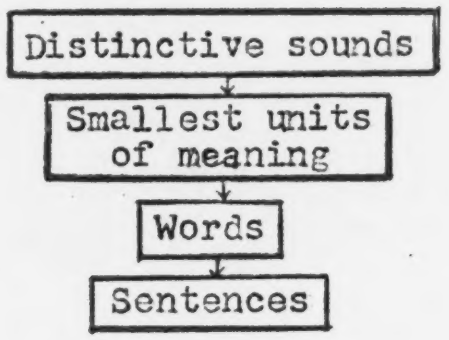
Word-order to indicate relationships is used more extensively in English than in Choctaw; where English uses word-order to turn some statements into yes-no questions, Choctaw uses a question-particle (hon in the following example):

He is coming
Is he coming

Minti	(He is coming.)
Minti hon	(Is he coming?)

This is a very brief explanation of the system of a spoken language: distinctive sounds are combined to make the meaningful parts of words; the meaningful parts of words are combined to make words; words are combined to make sentences. The system

may be diagrammed as follows:



So far, little has been said about writing. For natural languages, writing is developed long after speech and in order to give language a visual form. The written forms of Choctaw and English are alphabetic writing, which means that the distinctive sounds of speech are represented by letters of the alphabet. The English alphabetic writing at its simplest is illustrated by a word like bet, in which each sound is represented by one letter.

However, English alphabetic writing is not always so simple. Take the word bought, for example. Like bet, it has only three sounds in speech; but, whereas the vowel sound in bet is spelled with the letter e, the vowel sound in bought is spelled o-u-g-h. Another significant point about English alphabetic writing is illustrated by words like do, no, and to. In actual speech, the vowel sounds in these words are usually three different sounds; but they are all spelled with the letter o.

Thus, it is not accurate to speak of "the sound of the letter o," for example, as if the letter o were used to spell only one sound. The letters of the alphabet have names which we call when we recite the alphabet; but what sounds they spell depend

on the words in which they occur.

English speech has about forty distinctive sounds. English alphabetic writing uses twenty-six letters of the alphabet to write these sounds. So there is not one letter to represent each sound. In fact, English has more than three hundred ways to spell the forty or so sounds of English. Consider, for example, the following spellings of the so-called long-e sound:

believe
receive
Pete
elite
green
leaf
deny
party
money

The diversity of English spelling is due to a number of factors. English has been written for about a thousand years. During its history, many spellings have been borrowed from other languages. And, all the while, English pronunciation has been changing--and is still changing; but English spelling has changed very little in the last 350 years.

Choctaw alphabetic writing is much younger--only about one hundred years old. In fact, Choctaw linguists ("two" is plural) are still working on some aspects of a Choctaw writing system. Consequently, Choctaw writing is much closer to having one letter to represent one sound than English is.

The information that has been presented so far in this section deals with the structure of language. Only one important generalization about word-meanings will be included here. The words of a language represent an analysis of the world.

An example of such an analysis are the commonly used terms baby, boy, and man, which may be used arbitrarily to divide the life-cycle of a male human being into stages. The stages are not exact: when does a baby become a boy? when does a boy become a man? And there is no reason that there must be three stages, since a person might view the life-cycle in either two or two-hundred stages.

Consequently, the relationship between language and reality in one language often differs from that relationship in another language. A good example of such a difference is that Choctaw and English do not divide the world of colors into the same categories.

In learning a second language, a person must, consequently, learn both the system of structures and the system of meanings. The learner may have difficulty at any point where the first language and the second language differ in either system.

A list of some terms commonly used in the study of language, with definitions, is contained in Appendix A.

IV. How the Program can meet the needs of Choctaw bilingual children

As was indicated previously, the Program is designed to meet the educational needs of Choctaw bilingual children (see Section II). Special materials and methods have been designed to meet each of the four basic needs listed.

A. Learning English. The Program staff has made a careful study of both Choctaw and English to identify features of English which may be difficult for native speakers of Choctaw to learn. On the basis of this study, the staff has prepared special materials for teaching the features thus identified.

B. Learning through Choctaw. Specific parts of the special language materials mentioned in Section IV. are written in Choctaw. Parts of the social studies material which will be available in January 1972 are in Choctaw. It is suggested that teaching aides conduct additional classroom work in Choctaw for speakers of Choctaw.

C. Developing positive self-concepts. A set of read-aloud stories and a large portion of the social studies materials mentioned in Section IV. B. are devoted to helping Choctaw children to develop positive self-concepts. It is suggested that teachers and aides use additional materials and techniques to help in this development. It will help for Choctaw parents to visit classrooms and, when they can, assist with instruction; they can present talks and demonstrations about Choctaw culture.

D. Having teachers who understand. The staff has produced, specifically for teachers and aides of the Program, materials on Choctaw language and culture. Eight or nine days of workshops in 1971-1972 will be devoted to helping teachers and aides to increase their understanding of the Choctaw people.

Materials mentioned in this Section are described in Sections V and VI.

V. Materials available for the classroom

A. Oral language materials. A set of eighty lessons in English, by Mr. Roy Willis, edited by Mr. Dale Nicklas, revised by Mr. Todd Downing. The lessons are designed to teach to speakers of Choctaw those features of English which may be most troublesome. Preparation for the English lessons is given in Choctaw. Included are diagnostic tests and teacher instructions. Additional lessons are in preparation.

B. Miami Linguistic Readers. A set of basic reading materials. The series, published by D. C. Heath and Company, is especially useful for children whose first language is Choctaw. It may be used as the basic reading program for all first-grade children.

C. Raed-aloud stories. A set of five stories about Choctaw children by Mrs. Mary Frye. (Additional stories will be available periodically during the year.) The stories are written to be read to primary children; they are useful not only as supplementary reading materials but also as techniques for helping Choctaw children to develop positive self-concepts.

D. Social studies kit. (Available January 1972) A multimedia kit of sequential materials on Choctaw language and culture by Mrs. Janice Arrendale and Mr. Randy Jacobs.

VI. Materials for inservice training

A. English for Speakers of Choctaw by Mr. Thurston Dale Nicklas. A basic introduction to problems speakers of Choctaw may encounter in learning English.

B. A Selected Bibliography of American-Indian Literature for Children by Dr. Joseph E. Littlejohn.

C. A Choctaw Orthography by Mr. Thurston Dale Nicklas. A basic introduction to the system of sounds and the system of writing Choctaw.

D. A Choctaw Morphology by Mr. Thurston Dale Nicklas. A description of the system of units of meaning in Choctaw.

E. A Choctaw Syntax by Mr. Thurston Dale Nicklas. (Available in Fall 1971). A description of Choctaw sentence structure.

F. A Brief History of Choctaw Culture by Dr. James Morrison. A short account of the development of Choctaw culture. Available both in print and on audiotape.

G. Demonstrations of Choctaw oral language materials by Mrs. Marie Dillard and Mrs. Norma Willie. A short videotape produced by Mr. Clyde Jackson. A teacher and a teaching aide demonstrate the use of the oral language lessons developed for the Program.

H. A Handbook for Teachers and Aides of the Choctaw Bilingual Education Program by Dr. Joseph E. Littlejohn.

VII. Some useful classroom techniques in bilingual education

It is generally agreed by experts in bilingual education that children learn English as a second language most rapidly and effectively in a classroom in which there is a lively, ongoing use of language throughout the school-day. Not all uses of language have to be structured like the oral language materials mentioned in Section V; in fact, many students of the language-development of children believe that children learn more about language (and about themselves) through informal, unstructured, natural use of language as they work and discover.

This section contains notes on several classroom techniques which foster the use of language by children.

A. Creative Drama. After the teacher or aide has read the children a story, for example, the children act out the story--in their own language and with their own actions. The general technique in creative dramatics is to help children to discover meaning in a story or a situation by acting out specific incidents. Acting out offers rich opportunities for both verbal and non-verbal expression. An excellent introduction to creative drama is Brian Way's Development Through Drama; it is clear and brief and full of specific suggestions for things to do in the classroom.

B. Role-playing. Role-playing is different from acting. In creative dramatics, children are giving a performance; in role-playing, they are not supposed to give a performance. In role-playing, a problem is established, and the children take

the roles of people who are involved in the problem and try to work out a solution. It is an excellent technique for using language to help children understand and begin to overcome prejudices and self-centeredness. Role playing can also contribute to the development of positive self-concepts. The best book on role-playing is Fannie Shaftel's Role-playing for Social Values.

C. Valuing techniques. Valuing techniques are techniques for getting people to examine their values in life and their behavior which is determined by their values. It is especially important that students in the Choctaw Bilingual Education Program--both Choctaw- and Anglo-American--devote some time to thinking through and talking about their behavior toward others. One basic technique is for the teacher to tell the children a relevant story without an ending and to ask the children to put themselves in the places of various characters in the story. Then the teacher can use various devices to get the children to think the situation through and to talk about their own feelings and the feelings of others. A good introduction to valuing techniques for primary children is Rath, Harmin, and Simon's Helping Children to Clarify Values.

D. Language games. A number of language games are available commercially today, such as Lotto, Junior Scrabble, and Syntactics. But perhaps the most useful ones are those that the teachers and aides, using a little imagination, can design to meet the real needs of students in their classrooms. With 3x5 cards and magic markers, for example, they can make word-cards for children to use

in sentence-building games; children can learn to read through putting together their own sentences with such word-cards. Primary children also enjoy oral rime-games played in teams to see which team can think the most words to rime with a beginning word. James Moffett gives useful suggestions for language-games in his book A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, K-6.

E. Making books. Letting students write, illustrate, and assemble their own books offers a variety of language-learning activities. The first book may be simply an illustrated dictionary. In making it, children can talk about words that mean something to them--calf, pig, hungry, happy; then they can learn to print these words and, with colored paper, scissors, and crayons, to make a first dictionary of their words. It should be very useful for them to make a short Choctaw-English dictionary in this manner. When they have learned to read, children can tell their own stories to teachers and aides, who can write them down; then the children can make books with their own stories. In the book mentioned in VII. D., Moffett gives many interesting ideas for the use of children-produced books.

F. Discussions. Children learn much about language from classroom discussions. Although some of the discussions may be structured, children learn much from just "talking things over." After a walk around the schoolyard to collect leaves of various sizes and shapes, for example, it is pleasant and useful for children to talk informally about how things are different. An interesting technique is for teachers and aides to bring unusual objects such as block puzzles or abstract sculptures

into the classroom and just leave them on a table for children to examine and to talk about. Sometimes, children may carry on discussions in small groups; at other times, they may participate in more structured discussions with teachers and aides.

VIII. The teacher preparation component

To meet the long-range educational needs of Choctaw children, the Program also has a preservice component to train Choctaws as teachers of Choctaws. In 1970-1971, ten Choctaw graduates of McCurtain County schools entered the Program at Southeastern State College; in 1971-1972, fifteen Choctaws will participate.

In addition to the regular teacher-training curriculum, these students take many courses which emphasize Choctaw language and culture and Choctaw educational problems.

As School-Community Coordinators these preservice teachers will also spend approximately 150 hours each in the schools and Choctaw communities of Mc Curtain County during 1971-1972. They will talk to Choctaw parents, counsel and tutor Choctaw children, and observe and teach in the schools.

These students are working toward master's degrees in elementary education.

Appendix A: Some Terms Used in Language-Study

1. Basic sentence-patterns. The small number of key arrangements of words in the sentences of a language. The most commonly used English patterns are illustrated by the following sentences:

    Eleanor is nice

    Eleanor is here.

    Eleanor is chairman.

    Eleanor procrastinates.

    Eleanor hit Martin.

    Eleanor gave Martin gifts.

    The positions of the words within these patterns are signals of how the words are related to one another; for example, the position of Eleanor before the verb hit signals that Eleanor performs the action "hit," and the position of Martin after the verb signals that Martin is affected by the action.

2. Distribution. The arrangement of the sounds of a language to form words. For example, Choctaw does not have the m- sound at the ends of words, and English does not begin words with the ng- sound found in sing and bang.

3. Fricative. A sound, such as the sound that begins the word fig and the sound that ends pass, in which the air passing through the mounth is not stopped, but is pushed out in a manner which produces friction.

4. Grapheme. A letter of the alphabet or a combination of letters of the alphabet to represent one of the distinctive

sounds of a language. The distinctive sound commonly called the long o is, for example, represented by a number of graphemes in English. Some of the graphemes are:

ao as in boat

o...e as in tote

ow as in low

See also phoneme.

5. Intonational patterns. An arrangement of accents and voice-pitch used in making an utterance. The string of words "Jane is here" may, for example, be spoken as either a statement or a question, depending on the intonational pattern. If the pitch of the voice rises slightly at the end of the utterance and then falls rapidly into silence--

Jane is here

the utterance is a statement. If, on the other hand, the pitch rises, stays up, and the voice stops--

Jane is here

the utterance is a question. Accent (or stress), which is also part of an intonational pattern, is not marked in the examples given above.

6. Linguistics. The study of language. The term is used with various meanings. Some people define it as "the scientific study of language." Although it is commonly used to refer to the study of the sounds, words, and the sentence-structure of language, it can be used more broadly so as to include psychological and sociological aspects of language.

7. Morpheme. The smallest unit of meaning in language. The word remake contains two morphemes: re-, which means "again," and make, which means "to bring into being." The total meaning of remake is a composite of the two meanings. Some words--boy and dog, for example--are only one morpheme long; many, like remake, consist of more than one morpheme.
8. Orthography. A writing system for a language.
9. Phoneme. The smallest unit of sound which can make a difference in meaning. For example, the spoken version of the word spelled p-e-t contains three phonemes, each represented in writing by one letter of the alphabet. The spoken word bet also contains three phonemes. Pet and bet, as spoken, differ only in the initial phonemes.
10. Quality. In reference to the distinctive sounds of a language, the total of the things a speaker does to his vocal tract to produce a sound. For example, the tongue position for the vowel in the word hot is lower in the mouth than for the vowel in hit; this is a difference in quality.
11. Quantity. In reference to the distinctive sounds of a language, the amount of time it takes to produce a sound. Quantity is not generally significant in English, since, for example, the word spelled k-i-d is the same word regardless of how long a person holds the vowel. However, quantity is distinctive in Choctaw, since some words differ in only the length of vowels.
12. Stop. A sound, such as the sound that begins the word spelled p-i-g, in which the flow of air through the mouth is stopped completely at some point. Other words beginning with stops

are cat, dog, bear.

13. Syntax. The system by which the relationships among words in sentences are signalled. (Or a description of such a system.) An important feature of English syntax is word-order.

14. Transformation. A change in a basic sentence-pattern or in any of its parts. Some transformations delete parts (You will be here tomorrow→Be here tomorrow); some substitute one item for another (The girl is here→who is here); others add new parts (The girl is here→The beautiful girl is here); and still others rearrange parts (Jane is here→Here is Jane).

15. Voice. The vibration of the vocal cords during the production of a sound. A sound is said to be voiced if the vocal cords vibrate during its production, and voiceless if there is no significant vibration. Many English sounds are distinguished from one another by only the presence or absence of voice; for example, the only significant difference between the pronunciation of bit and pit is that the initial sound in bit is voiced and the initial sound in pit is voiceless. Other pairs of sounds which contrast in the same manner are those commonly spelled as follows:

Voiced	Voiceless
d	t
g	k
j	ch
z	s
v	f

Of the six pairs of sounds listed, Choctaw uses only the b/p distinction; it does not have any of the other voiced sounds.